

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. An image processing apparatus comparing an image of a product with a reference image in accordance with a set process for visually inspecting said product, comprising:

inspection type inputting means for inputting a desired type of inspection of a plurality of types of inspections; and

operation guiding means for guiding an operation of setting said process suitable for said desired type of inspection input by said inspection type inputting means.

2. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that the input of said desired type of inspection from said inspection type inputting means is performed by using common inspection names in visual inspection.

3. The image processing apparatus according to claim 2, further comprising menu presenting means for presenting a menu of said common inspection names respectively corresponding to said plurality of types of inspections.

4. The image processing apparatus according to claim 3, further comprising explanation presenting means for presenting as desired an explanation related to said type of inspection corresponding to arbitrary said common inspection name in said menu presented by said menu presenting means.

5. The image processing apparatus according to claim 4, characterized in that said explanation shows a content of said visual inspection of said corresponding type of inspection by using an illustration of a typical product as an object of the visual inspection.

6. The image processing apparatus according to claim 4,

characterized in that said explanation illustrates an application of said visual inspection of said corresponding type of inspection.

7. The image processing apparatus according to claim 2, characterized in that said common inspection name is any of presence inspection, conformance inspection, orientation inspection, position inspection, dimension inspection, chip and burr inspection and surface defect inspection.

8. The image processing apparatus according to claim 1, characterized in that said operation guiding means includes

5 fragment image guiding means for guiding a setting operation of a fragment image of image of said product to be inspected corresponding to said desired type of inspection, and

image characteristic guiding means for guiding a setting operation of an image characteristic of said image of said product subjected to inspection corresponding to said desired type of inspection.

9. The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said fragment image guiding means has window-shape menu presenting means for presenting a menu indicating a plurality of types of window shapes to be possible used for setting said fragment image.

10. The image processing apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said image characteristic guiding means has image characteristic menu presenting means for presenting a menu showing a plurality of said image characteristics to be set.

11. The image processing apparatus according to claim 10, wherein said image characteristic guiding means further has image characteristic explanation presenting means for presenting as desired an explanation related to arbitrary said image characteristic on said menu presented by 5 said image characteristic menu presenting means.

12. The image processing apparatus according to claim 11, characterized in that said explanation presented by said image characteristic explanation presenting means shows said arbitrary image characteristic by using an illustration.

13. An image processing method of comparing an image of a product with a reference image in accordance with a set process for visually inspecting said product, comprising:

the inspection type inputting step of inputting a desired type of inspection of a plurality of types of inspections; and

the operation guiding step guiding an operation of setting said process suitable for said desired type of inspection input in said inspection type inputting step.

14. A visual inspection system comprising a controlling portion for comparing an image of a product with a reference image in accordance with a set process for determining a status of said product based on the comparison result for output, an inputting portion for externally inputting information, and a display portion, wherein said controlling portion includes

5 inspection type identifying means for displaying a menu of common inspection names in visual inspection respectively corresponding to a plurality of types of inspections for identifying a desired type of inspection from said displayed menu based on said information input from said inputting portion, and

10 setting process executing means for displaying on said display portion a guidance of an operation of setting said process suitable for said desired type of inspection identified by said inspection type identifying means for performing a setting process based on said information input from said inputting portion.

15. The visual inspection system according to claim 14, characterized in that said common inspection name is any of presence inspection, conformance inspection, orientation inspection, position

5 inspection, dimension inspection, chip and burr inspection and surface defect inspection.

16. The visual inspection system according to claim 14, further comprising a pickup portion for taking an image of said product for outputting to said controlling portion.

17. The visual inspection system according to claim 16, characterized in that said reference image is an image of said product taken and output by said pickup portion.